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ABSTRACT

This guide, designed for regular classroom teachers in whose mainstream classes language-minority children are enrolled, offers background information and suggestions for helping these students become proficient in English reading and writing and for involving them as resources for global and cultural awareness in majority-language classmates. The first chapter discusses specific barriers to language acquisition among language-minority students: (1) reductionist concepts of language and learning implicit in the mainstream curriculum; (2) cultural differences; and (3) inadequate communication among adults in the children's lives. The second chapter examines the reading and writing needs of this population, including instructional materials, classroom environment, topics, and nonverbal communication. The third chapter describes useful classroom techniques, all within the whole-language approach to teaching, including: using literary works; providing substantial oral language experiences; providing time for silent, sustained reading; encouraging use of student journals; incorporating technology; and promoting cooperative learning. It is concluded that meeting the needs of language-minority students in a mainstream classroom is possible if teachers recognize the barriers to educational opportunity facing the children, understand that they are better prepared than they realize to work with this population, use cooperative learning strategies, and see the children as cultural resources. (MSE)

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Mainstreaming Language Minority Children in Reading and Writing

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Mainstreaming Language Minority Students in Reading and Writing

by
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and
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Introduction

I just sat in my classes and didn't understand anything. . . . My teachers never called on me or talked to me. I think they either forgot I was there or else wish I wasn't.

–Immigrant girl from Mexico (Olsen 1988)

Over the past several years thousands of people from Latin America, Southeast Asia, and other non-English-speaking countries have been entering the United States. These immigrants, refugees, international students, and second-generation immigrants, together with native born non-English-speaking Americans, all have a need for English-as-a-second-language (ESL) instruction. The challenge to the schools presented by the influx of these people concerns not only the ESL specialist but the regular classroom teacher as well. It is not uncommon nowadays for children to appear on the school's doorstep not knowing one word of English, and for the school not to have any special program for these children other than to place them in a regular classroom.

The most satisfactory arrangement to meet the immediate needs of these language minority students would be to place them in either a bilingual or ESL classroom. But because of a shortage of bilingual and ESL teachers, many of these children are being assigned to regular classrooms and mainstreamed with English-speaking students. In the case of language minority students, this means that they will be taught

by regular classroom teachers who may or may not have the support of an ESL specialist. As a result, teachers frequently feel unprepared to work with these children; and they become frustrated because they are already overloaded with too many students and have too much to do.

Teachers who have not been trained in bilingual education may feel they know next to nothing about it. The first thing these teachers need to recognize is that they are more prepared to work with language minority students than they realize. They usually have an intuitive grasp of the processes of language development and routinely provide appropriate language development activities. For that matter, anyone (parents, siblings, playmates, caretakers) who spends time with small children contributes to their language development. They may not be able to articulate the stages children go through in acquiring language and may not know the linguistic terminology used to describe the processes of language development; nevertheless, they take on the role of language teacher and assume correctly that little children will learn the language. This natural approach to nurturing language development, rather than teaching it in highly structured sequence, works equally well in the classroom.

Once teachers accept that minority language children have the capacity to learn English, they must involve them in meaningful, interactive language activities. They must develop a classroom environment that is linguistically rich and success oriented, where all (including the teacher) are free to express themselves, to experiment, to explore.

Teachers need to use language that is meaningful to children. They must focus on the message rather than on each individual word. The goal of language is to communicate, not to learn sounds and vocabulary in isolation. In the beginning, it is the context, the linguistic, paralinguistic, and situational clues as well as the interpersonal involvement, that will lead to language understanding and growth. The following anecdote illustrates the importance of context.

When a kindergarten teacher asked a native-English-speaking child to push in the chairs around a table, immediately one of the Cam-

bodian-speaking children rushed over and pushed in the chairs before the designated child had a chance to do it. Although the Cambodian child was not able to identify the individual words in the teacher's request and could not repeat them back, she knew from the teacher's gestures, tone, and glances what the message was. The teacher had tapped into the Cambodian child's need for recognition and praise by inadvertently providing an opportunity for her to perform.

Thus teachers of language minority students in mainstream classrooms can guide their children to success in reading and writing English by challenging them to take risks with their language experiences in a non-judgmental setting and by focusing on the communicative aspects of reading and writing.

This fastback is designed to help regular teachers deal with the mainstreamed language minority students in their classes. With a positive attitude and a refocusing of language activities they already provide, teachers will be able to help language minority students become proficient in reading and writing English as well as involving them as resources for developing global awareness and a tolerance of differences in their English-speaking classmates (Weed and Sommer 1990).

Barriers to Language Acquisition

In order to teach language minority students to read and write English, it is important first to recognize some of the barriers these children face and to understand the cultural and linguistic "baggage" they carry with them to the school. Cazden (1986) has identified three such barriers:

1. Reductionist concepts of language and learning implicit in the mainstream curriculum.
2. Cultural differences that create additional barriers to language acquisition.
3. Inadequate communication among the many adults in these children's lives (p. 10).

Each of these barriers is discussed more fully below.

The Reductionist Barrier

As used here, *reductionist* means breaking up or fragmenting complex tasks into component parts. Lately we have seen a trend toward the use of reductionist teaching models. Madeline Hunter's (1969) direct teaching approach is one popular example of reductionist pedagogy. In her approach to teaching a lesson, she stresses motivation, retention, and reinforcement. In reading and writing, this is accomplished by setting specific behavioral objectives and planning activities

for which there is only one correct answer. Motivation supposedly comes from the success students experience in achieving the objectives. Whether or not the subject matter makes any sense to the learner is of no consequence. The methodology consists of identifying so-called language subskills and organizing them into a mathematical-type structure, where it is assumed that learners must master each step or subskill before they can move on.

Widespread use of Hunter's direct teaching methods has resulted in a kind of mentality that "if they know the parts of speech, they will automatically become proficient writers." Instructional materials consist mainly of workbooks, worksheets, and other drill-and-practice devices. What Hunter's method does not teach is problem solving, creative thinking, and creative production – all crucial components of the reading and writing process, especially where language minority learners are concerned.

Probably the major push for using reductionist teaching methods is that they are seen as a way to help children do better on standardized tests. Since teachers' evaluations are based, in part, on their students' performance on standardized tests, it is easy to see why many teachers have allowed such assessment tools to influence their instructional approach.

The extensive work of Frank Smith (1978), Kenneth and Yetta Goodman (1977), and Sir Alan Bullock (1975) has shown that a reductionist approach is totally inappropriate for language minority students. Rather, these children need to acquire oral and written language skills through active use of the language for authentic communication purposes.

In order to allow language minority children to overcome the barrier of reductionism, Cummins (1989) suggests that teachers use the interactive/experiential instructional model characterized by:

1. Genuine dialogue between student and teacher in both oral and written modalities.

2. Guidance and facilitation rather than total teacher control of student learning.
3. Encouragement of student-student talk in a collaborative learning context.
4. Encouragement of meaningful language use by students rather than correctness of surface forms.
5. Conscious integration of language use and development with all curricular content rather than teaching language and other content as isolated subjects.
6. A focus on developing higher-level cognitive skills rather than factual recall.
7. Task presentation that generates intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation (pp. 33-34).

Teachers must insist that tests used in the schools take into account the full range of curricular objectives, including those which lend themselves to the interactive/experiential model of teaching. If commercial tests that assess communication and higher-level thinking skills are not available, teachers should apply pressure in their districts to develop their own criterion-referenced or norm-referenced tests (Cummins 1989). In this way, the mainstream teacher will be encouraged to use those methods of teaching appropriate for language minority students instead of insisting these youngstérs fit into the mold of a reductionist curriculum, where they are prone to fail.

Another place where reductionism affects language minority students is with the use of computers. In principle, computers should enhance the curriculum by providing such features as access to databases and library resources. Computers also can enrich communication skills by allowing children to share their writing with each other. However, the true potential of computers is too often unrealized. As is often the case with new technology, computers are apt to be used for old functions and for reinforcing existing patterns rather than changing them. For example, most software found in schools that language minority students attend is used only for drill and practice. Much

of the software is designed on the erroneous assumption that language is learned by starting with sounds and then moving to words, phrases, and sentences, and that each level must be practiced and mastered before attempting the next level. There are, however, ways to use computers effectively with language minority children. These will be discussed in a later chapter.

The Cultural Differences Barrier

The second barrier for language minority children is learning to read and write in a culture different from their own. Although there have been substantial efforts in recent years to include minority groups in language arts texts, many of these texts still portray cultural differences in a context of large-group stereotypes. For example, in the story, "My Pueblo" (Clark 1989), in the second-grade Silver Burdett and Ginn basal reader series, contemporary Pueblo Native Americans are depicted as living in adobe houses with dirt floors. The mother in the story is shown on her knees grinding colored corn for a family meal. While some members of this tribe still maintain a lifestyle similar to the one described in the story, most live in modern houses and do their shopping at the local grocery store.

Teachers need to be aware of the cultural backgrounds of their students and be sensitive to the potential consequences of using text materials that do not accurately reflect these backgrounds. One solution may be for teachers to create their own materials based on cultural input from their students. Another solution is to modify existing stories by substituting characters, plots, and settings that reflect different cultures and use these modified stories with the whole class. Also, children can write their own materials in the form of family stories, genealogies, and autobiographies.

Students learning English come to writing situations with a wealth of experiences from a variety of cultural settings. It is important for teachers to know as much as possible about students' backgrounds and interests so that they can use their experiences in writing assignments.

Teachers also must be careful about assigning writing topics that deal with experiences children from other cultures have not had. For example, because the topic of snow is a popular one during the winter months, a second-grade teacher asked her students to write about being caught in a blizzard. Before writing, the children brainstormed about what it was like to be out in a snowstorm and being caught in a blizzard. On the first draft, Jaime, a boy from El Salvador, wrote:

The Blizzard

Snow is cold.
Snow is nice.
I like snow.

Noticing that what Jaime wrote showed little connection with the assignment, the teacher attempted to explain the concept of a snowstorm by showing the boy pictures of a snowstorm and by bringing a "snowcone" into class for him to taste. The boy's second draft didn't show much change over the first:

The Blizzard

Snow is cold.
Snow is good to eat.
I like snow.

Later, the teacher learned from a Spanish-speaking teacher aide why her attempt at concept building was not adequate to give Jaime the experience he needed to write about blizzards. Even though he had experienced being cold before, Jaime could not understand why it was necessary for a person to apply layers of clothes to survive. Also, Jaime saw "freezing" as being something that occurred inside the body, not outside. This was reinforced when he tasted the "snowcone," because it was the same feeling as when he tasted *raspados* in El Salvador. Despite the teacher's best effort, the experience gap was too great for Jaime to write meaningfully about blizzards.

Sometimes cultural differences are manifested in very subtle ways. For example, a teacher in a class with a number of Mexican-American students asked her students to write on the topic, "Making Tacos," a topic she felt was within the life experience of her class. However, her objective was to give students practice in sequential writing, that is, putting the steps of a process in the proper order – certainly a legitimate objective in teaching writing. To her dismay, many of the Mexican-American children failed to meet her writing objective. Instead, they wrote stories about the social context in which tacos are consumed. John Paul's story below is typical of the children's responses to the assignment.

How to Make Tacos
by John Paul Sarmiento

> I like to eat tacos. Yesterday me and my dad ate tacos and drank Pepsi. We both ate three tacos. We went to a Mexican restaurant. We went there for dinner because we were far away from our house and it was late at night. My dad thought that my mom was asleep, but when we got home, we were in trouble!

Where the teacher made her mistake was not in choosing the topic (most Mexican-Americans know how to make tacos) but rather in assuming that the students could carry out her objective of sequential writing. What the teacher failed to realize is that when writing narratives about significant personal events, these children tend to focus on interactions with family and friends. To write about tacos outside the context of their social experience was very difficult for the children in this teacher's class.

The Barrier of Inadequate Communication by Adults

A third barrier is the inadequate and/or inappropriate communication of some teachers when interacting with mainstreamed language minority students and their parents. Part of the problem is that lan-

guage minority students tend to be highly mobile, especially those from migrant-worker families. Because these students often move from school to school in a single year, their teachers do not get to know them, their parents, or their backgrounds. And from their brief contact with many different teachers, they often receive mixed messages about their culture, their language, and themselves.

Another underlying communication problem is teachers' attitude toward language minority students. Teachers are too quick to label these youngsters as *at risk*, a term much in vogue these days. Such labeling often is used to rationalize failure when these youngsters happen to have problems in school. A corollary to seeing language minority youngsters as at risk is seeing them as linguistically deficient and therefore less intelligent. When teachers hold such attitudes, they are contributing to the self-fulfilling prophecy that being at risk means failing in school (Flores, Tefft-Cousin, and Diaz 1991). Thus it is crucial for teachers to examine their attitudes toward language and culture and to avoid putting deficit labels on students. And above all, teachers must communicate to language minority children that they are capable of learning and that their linguistic background is respected.

Teachers' attitudes affect parent/teacher communication as well. Problems may arise when the culture of the school contradicts the culture of the home. For example, the culture of the school may frown on the use of double negatives, as in, "Hey man, I ain't got no underwear!" even though this usage is perfectly acceptable outside the classroom. Parents and other caregivers at home often use speech that is ungrammatical, but their concern is with the content of their message, not its grammatical correctness.

When the teacher constantly corrects a child's grammar or usage, the message communicated is that the language of the school is superior to the language of the home; therefore, home is bad and school is good. This makes children uncomfortable, because they are put in the position of choosing between the language of the school and the language of the home. This may cause communication problems,

because the parents resent the teacher's apparent lack of sensitivity toward the home language. This could result in the parents having a negative attitude toward school, which, in turn, is passed on to children and could become a barrier to their learning to read and write standard English once they are ready to do so.

Above all, teachers must make an effort to communicate directly with parents at a level both can understand. This may require arranging for a translator. This could be a bilingual volunteer, a parent aide, or even older siblings.

Another aspect of the communication barrier is the failure of teachers who work with the same language minority students to communicate among themselves about their roles and objectives. One area needing attention is the curriculum. Cazden (1986) found that it is not uncommon for the same concept or skill to be taught over and over again to ESL students who had classes with three different teachers. With such repetition focused on mostly low-level skills, it is no wonder that some language minority students show little progress in English. What is needed is regularly planned communication among teachers who are teaching the same ESL children so that a coordinated program of language development can be implemented.

What Language Minority Students Need

In order to learn to read and write, all language acquirers first need to understand the message. For language minority students to get the message when enrolled in classes conducted in English, they have specific needs that must be met. They need help both in understanding the relationship between reading, writing, and the environment and in understanding the way in which writing in English is structured.

Reading Needs

The roots of literacy are established in early childhood. In literate societies where print pervades the environment, young children quickly discover what print is used for and how it is organized. For example, even though young children may not recognize the word "STOP" when separated from its familiar environmental setting in the form of a red, octagonal stop sign, they still are able to "read" it when riding in a car. And they learn that a group of letters makes up a word and provides information. When children enter school, they find that environmental print has been brought in from the outside in the form of labels teachers put on items around the classroom. Some teachers augment labeling items by posting notices and other messages on the bulletin board as part of the reading experience: "Happy Birthday, Lupe!" or "On Friday Come See the Video on Polar Bears."

Other environmental print experiences for language minority students include displays of familiar grocery store items. Also, displays

of magazine and newspaper advertisements of products that are used at home or that are familiar from TV commercials are effective print-rich sources. Exposing children to environmental print is an important aspect of language and reading development. Learning to read words from their immediate environment gives children a sense of accomplishment and usually elicits positive reinforcement from parents and other caregivers.

Another important component of a print-rich environment is a well-stocked classroom library. Access to a well-designed classroom library increases student interest in using books and communicates to them that they have some say in choosing what materials they want to look at or read during "free-choice" periods. Morrow (1989) suggests that teachers build a library corner with shelves for displaying books with their covers out as well as standard shelving. Other features of the library corner might be a bulletin board, a felt story board, a listening station, and an author's table. Morrow also recommends such creature comforts as a rocking chair, pillows, a rug, and a "private spot" (cubbie).

Materials in the library corner should reflect the various language and cultural groups in the class as well as children's interests and reading levels. The collection should include several types of children's literature: picture concept books, picture storybooks, traditional literature, realistic literature, easy-to-read books, fables and folktales, informational books, wordless books, and poetry collections.

Pictures are important tools for teaching reading with language minority students. Pictures serve to expand children's experience and are especially useful when presenting material that is culturally or linguistically unfamiliar to non-English-speaking students.

Also, such non-verbal behaviors as gestures, facial expressions, and body language help communicate conceptual meaning. For instance, if the word *skip* occurs in a book and its meaning is not conveyed from context, a teacher can communicate the meaning to language minority students by showing them how the skipping is done. Better

yet, let the children demonstrate skipping and learn through active participation.

Writing Needs

Writing needs are closely related to reading needs and cannot really be separated. However, there are elements unique to writing that teachers of language minority students should consider. First, children need to see that writing connects with reading. As in reading, children can take charge of their own literacy development by gradually constructing the rules of written language in much the same manner as they acquire oral language (Bissex 1980). That is, they gradually develop an awareness of the functions and forms of print by observing how written words are used in their environment in the form of signs, labels, lists, notes, letters, and storybooks.

Second, language minority children need to practice their writing in a social context. This means that teachers must create the kinds of social contexts and conditions that allow for communicative interaction. Writing activities should involve not only thinking and linguistic processes but social processes as well. As these processes interact, children come to see that writing in English serves a social purpose.

A common approach for writing assignments is: 1) the teacher initiates or suggests a topic, 2) the students respond with a piece of writing, and 3) the teacher evaluates the writing as to content and form. This initiation-response-evaluation approach limits the range of speech acts that language minority children naturally use when they work in small groups. In such settings, children talk more and produce a wider range of speech acts than when they are responding only to teacher-initiated instruction. When speech acts increase, children's realm of experience is expanded; and this leads to more productive and meaningful writing (Johnson 1989).

Third, writing assignments for language minority students need to be on topics within their life experiences. Also, teachers must be-

come aware of their own cultural expectations about topics they assign if they are to be effective in helping children become proficient writers. For example, one white, middle-class teacher assigned the topic, "The Football Game," to her sixth-grade students. When several Hispanic students wrote about soccer (fútbol), she lowered their grades for "not following the assignment." From her cultural perspective, she expected the students to write about *American football*; whereas from the students' cultural perspective, the assignment was to write about *soccer*. Thus children were penalized for not responding in a way that was congruent with the teacher's cultural expectations.

Fourth, language minority children need to write frequently. Most authorities on teaching writing advocate writing daily in order to develop proficiency in writing. When children miss their regular writing time for a substantial period, their writing suffers. For example, Peregoy and Boyle (1989-90) found that bilingual kindergartners regressed from writing phrases or short sentences to only copying words off the board when their daily writing period was suspended for a period of three months.

In both reading and writing, the important thing for language minority students is to get the message. To do this, they need additional help in the form of print-rich environments, pictures, and non-verbal cues. They need to develop their writing skills in a social context and by writing frequently on topics that relate to their experiences. Above all, teachers must recognize that all language minority students can "write" even though they may not yet be proficient in English.

What Teachers Can Do

Teaching reading and writing to mainstreamed language minority students will require some modification of the teaching strategies used in the existing language arts curriculum. Specifically, six teaching strategies that have been especially successful in helping language minority children to learn to read and write in English are:

- Using literary works
- Providing substantial oral language experiences
- Providing time for silent, sustained reading (SSR)
- Encouraging the use of student journals
- Incorporating the use of technology
- Using cooperative learning

These strategies all fall under the *whole-language* approach to teaching the language arts. This approach is presented below, followed by a discussion of each of the six strategies.

The Whole-Language Approach

The whole-language approach is a way of bringing student and teacher together to negotiate understanding and meaning in language. (See fastback 307 *Whole Language = Whole Learning* by Claudia E. Cornett and Lesley A. Blankenship.) Whole-language teachers invite students to use and develop their literate voice as they work on

various activities. They listen to students and foster their independence by having them *self-select* reading materials and writing activities. Self-selection is one of the basic tenets of the whole-language approach, namely, making language meaningful. Language is used to accomplish some real purpose, not something to be learned in isolated bits without contextual meaning. Language occurs in meaningful situations, and it is in those situations that meaning is made. All language processes (speaking, listening, reading, writing) are integrated throughout the curriculum. The curriculum is organized around solving real problems and uses language in ways that are relevant and functional in the real world.

One example of whole language long used by primary teachers, and particularly appropriate for language minority students, is the *language experience* approach. Briefly, this approach has three steps. First, children write or dictate a story using their own experience and imagination. Second, the teacher accepts what the children have written by responding to the content (not the form) but edits for spelling, mechanics, and grammar to conform to standard English because this is what children will see in print. Finally, the children use their own stories as a reading text, one that has personal meaning.

Freeman and Freeman (1989) summarize the essence of the whole-language approach with the six principles listed below:

- Language classes should be learner-centered.
- Language is best learned when kept whole.
- Language instruction should employ all four modes: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Language in the classroom should be meaningful and functional.
- Language is learned through social interaction.
- Language is learned when teachers have faith in learners.

Let us turn now to see how these six principles are implemented using the the six strategies mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

Using Literary Works

In the context of whole language, literary works mean real books, books that are written for children to read and enjoy, not basal readers or skill-and-drill sheets. With literary works, teachers engage students in a variety of activities using sentence pattern strategies and discourse pattern strategies. These two types of strategies are explained below.

Sentence pattern strategies. These strategies are frequently used in mainstream classes with language minority students and require patterned books. Patterned books have predictable features, such as familiar content and rhyming or repeated phrases, and often contain pictures that facilitate meaning. The predictable patterns allow beginning language minority readers to become involved immediately in a literacy event in English.

One way to present patterned books is through a shared, whole-group experience. The predictable stories in patterned books are ideal for shared experiences because they allow children to guess what will come next, thereby encouraging participation. Peregoy and Boyle (1990) describe the process language minority children in a first grade go through when making the reading-meaning connection using the popular patterned book, *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* (Martin 1967). The story, illustrated with a colorful picture on each page, repeats a simple sentence pattern that has both rhythm and rhyming. After hearing the book read once through, the children responded to the second reading as follows:

(Teacher turns the page and children see a picture of a red bird.)
Children say: "Red Bird!"
Teacher reads: "I see a red bird looking at me!
Red bird, Red bird, what do you see?"
(Teacher turns the page and children see a picture of a yellow duck.)
Children say: "Yellow duck!"
Teacher reads: "I see a yellow duck looking at me.
Yellow duck, yellow duck what do you see?"

(Teacher turns the page and children see picture of a blue horse.)
Children say: "Blue horse lookin' at me."
Teacher reads: "I see a blue horse looking at me."
Blue horse, blue horse what do you see?"
(Peregoy and Boyle 1990, pp. 58-59)

The story continues, with each page introducing a new colorful character (a green frog, a white dog, a black sheep, a goldfish). Gradually the children move beyond just saying the name of the animal and respond by saying the full sentence pattern: "I see a _____ looking at me."

After the teacher reads patterned stories like this several times, children can read the books to each other during free reading time. They also can create their own versions of the story and tell it to each other using flannel board pieces or their own drawings.

Patterned writing. After exposure to the repetitive sentences in several patterned stories, young children can write and illustrate their own books using the patterned writing format they have seen in other books. Patterned writing also works with older children as well. When one of the authors (Johns) asked several upper-grade teachers in his university methods class to try patterned writing with their own students, some were skeptical at first because they thought the subject matter was too "babyish." However, most admitted later that the experience had been a positive one. One teacher went so far as to say that this was one of the few activities some of her limited-English-speaking students had been excited about during the whole year. The teachers discovered that their students participated in the writing assignment with enthusiasm when they could substitute their own subject matter in place of the "babyish" bears, ducks, and goldfish. Following is an example of a sixth-grade boy's patterned writing story, which uses basically the same pattern as the *Brown Bear* story above used with first-graders.

Jet Plane, Jet Plane, What Do You See?
by Matt Bane

Jet plane, jet plane, what do you see?
I see a runway looking at me.
Runway, runway, what do you see?
I see an Air Force pilot looking at me.
Air Force pilot, Air Force pilot, what do you see?
I see a passenger looking at me.
Passenger, passenger, what do you see?
I see some luggage looking at me.
Luggage, luggage, what do you see?
I see a man carrying me.
Man, man, what do you see?
I see an airplane taking off without me!

Picture books with repetitive text are another effective tool to use in helping children produce pieces of writing. An example of a repetitive picture book written in Spanish is *Sopa Fuchi* (Cowley 1986), which translated means smelly soup. *Sopa Fuchi* is a story about two whimsical characters who are making soup out of the most outrageous ingredients. Among the ingredients are *los caracoles* (the snails), *las plumas* (the feathers), *los cardos* (the thistles), *los cepillos de dientes* (the toothbrushes), *los calcetines* (the socks), and *los zapatos* (the shoes). The resulting soup is, of course, very *fuchi* (smelly).

A bilingual kindergarten teacher used this story to help her Spanish-speaking students generate Spanish words that described unpleasant things to eat. She then had the class members make up their own *Sopa Fuchi* stories and illustrate them with a picture. The stories were bound together to form a class book. Below is the contribution of Max, who decided to add *las cucarachas* (the cockroaches) to the soup. (Max's text translates as "In go the cockroaches.")

Figure 1. Max's artwork for his contribution to the "smelly soup."

Poems and songs are other good sources of patterned materials. The song, "Down By the Bay" in *The Book of Kid's Songs: A Holler-Along Handbook* (Cassidy and Cassidy 1986), has been used successfully to help language minority children expand their use of English. This song combines patterned language with predictability and goes like this:

> Back to my home, I dare not go,
> For if I do, my mother will say . . .
> Did you ever see a whale with a polka-dot tail,
> Down by the bay?

When the song is sung repeatedly, the lyrics are the same except for the third line, where the pattern is consistent but a few words change, as in:

> Did you ever see a bear combing his hair?
> Did you ever see llamas eating their pajamas?

After brainstorming several rhyming couplets and modeling the process with the whole class, a fifth-grade teacher asked her students to create their own third line for the song by substituting only three words in the pattern:

Did you ever see a _____ _____ his _____?

The students delighted in participating in this activity because they discovered they could alter the whole meaning of the song by changing very little of the original text. One Spanish-speaking boy displayed his creativity by using the pattern of "Down By the Bay" to write an original poem for Halloween.

Down By the Castle
by Roberto Calixtro

Down by the castle, where the monsters grow,
Down to my castle, I do not go,
For if I do, my mother will say,
"Did you ever see Jason eating a carnation?"
Down by the castle.

Using patterned books, poems, and songs gives language minority students immediate access to meaningful and enjoyable literacy experiences in English. Patterned writing provides a springboard for children to expand all their language skills. It can be used successfully with students at any age level and with students for whom English is a second language, as well as with those who are native speakers of English.

Discourse pattern strategies. These strategies take language beyond the sentence pattern level to a focus on whole stories, poems, and songs. They are the methods teachers use to help children make sense of such language elements as story sequence and plot.

A good way to start children thinking about discourse patterns is Reader's Theater. This is an interpretive reading activity in which chil-

dren are involved in the active process of constructing meaning, not just pronouncing words correctly. Unlike plays, which require costumes, stage movement, and sets, Reader's Theater is mostly an auditory experience (although children can incorporate gestures and facial expressions if they wish). It is especially well suited for language minority students for two reasons. First, those who are less proficient readers are able to be successful in oral reading because the material is scripted and generally requires repetition and practice before presentation. In addition, reinforcement of language pattern usage is possible by tape recording the material and playing it back later. Second, Reader's Theater scripts always contain dialogue. This is important for language minority students because it gives them an opportunity to use real language in a relevant setting. Of course, it is up to teachers to select subject matter that meets the needs and interests of particular students. Reader's Theater materials include short stories, poems, and plays with interesting characters, exciting plots, and, above all, lots and lots of dialogue. Although scripts for Reader's Theater are commercially available, teachers and students can write their own material and thus personalize it and make it more relevant.

A discourse strategy that works well in helping children to comprehend stories and story sequencing is *Story Retelling*. Retelling is a kind of oral composition, except that children are reconstructing someone else's message, not their own. The strategy begins with either the teacher reading to the children or letting them read to themselves. Once the story is read, the teacher invites an individual to retell the story to someone else: the teacher, a small group, or the whole class. If the story is a familiar one, the teacher can use informal discussion to assess comprehension and story sense. The following questions can be used for assessing to what degree children have understood the material:

1. Did the child provide the essential information in the order in which it appeared in the story? What was missing and why?

2. Did the child include extra information not in the story? Was this information implied or fabricated?
3. Did the child use wording that accurately represented ideas and meanings similar to those found in the story?
4. Are there aspects that are unclear relative to characters, plot, setting, etc?

When evaluating children's retelling skill, it is important not only to identify the missing elements but also to question children as to why certain things were left out. In other words, the key to the analysis is not so much what was included but what was omitted. Omissions give clues to possible cultural or linguistic reasons for the way language minority children perceive things and organize their thoughts. For example, Japanese students may have difficulty in relating information about a story with religious overtones, because they feel it is inappropriate to make personal comments on matters of religion. Given this, it would be a mistake for a teacher to conclude that a Japanese student was apparently unable to recall details on a certain religious aspect of a story when, in fact, he deliberately chose not to discuss the issue (McKay 1989).

If language minority children are having difficulty retelling stories, the teacher might try using a structured approach developed by Russell Stauffer called Directed Reading-Thinking Activity, or DR-TA (Stauffer and Harrell 1975). When using DR-TA, the teacher asks questions at different points in the story, guiding children in making predictions. After predictions are made, the teacher asks the children to check their guesses to see whether they were correct. In addition to the teacher's questions, children are encouraged to generate their own questions as the story proceeds. Eventually students incorporate the DR-TA strategy as a natural part of their independent reading. Using DR-TA involves three basic steps:

1. Teacher asks children what the title means and what they expect to find in a story with such a title and shows pictures from the text to facilitate predictions.

2. Teacher reads a sentence or two from the story, clarifies vocabulary, and asks children to check predictions they made regarding the title and to make further predictions about the story.
3. Teacher stops at important places in the story and asks further questions to monitor student's predictions and to permit them to predict what will happen next (Stauffer and Harrell 1975, p. 766).

If DR-TA is used on a regular basis, language minority children improve significantly in their ability to retell stories because they now have a strategy to use for organizing their thoughts. In addition, they find out that making predictions is fun, that active involvement can make reading interesting, and that so-called "good" readers sometimes make inaccurate predictions.

Another discourse strategy appropriate for language minority students is *Story Mapping*. A story map helps an author keep track of the relationships between characters, setting, and action. Many children's stories have a structure consisting of four basic elements. First, the story usually begins with the author creating a major character or two. Second, a goal the character(s) is trying to achieve is identified. Third, an obstacle is introduced that makes the goal difficult to achieve. This creates a conflict between the goal and the obstacle, often called the story problem. Finally, the author resolves the conflict. For example, in the children's classic, "Cinderella," the central character's goal is to figure out a way to get to the ball. The wicked stepmother is the obstacle, and the problem is resolved by the intervention of the fairy godmother.

Below is an example of a story map developed by a second-grade bilingual class and their teacher based on the Cinderella story. Note that the mapping structure uses just four words as the basis for the grid: "Someone," "Wants," "But," and "So."

Figure 2. Bilingual second-graders' map of "Cinderella."

Someone	Wants	But	So
Cinderella	Wants to go to the ball	But her mean stepmother wouldn't let her go	So the fairy god-mother helped her to go
Ugly stepsisters	Want to marry handsome prince	But he does not like them	So they marry someone else*

*When asked where it said in the story that the ugly stepsisters married someone else, the children admitted it did not say so in the story. But they were not willing to let the issue drop; in their view all girls get married regardless of how ugly they are.

When making a story map, children have to delve into the text deeply enough to recreate the character-goal-obstacle-resolution relationships in ways that are true to the text and meaningful for them. Even young children can do this using a simple story like "Cinderella," as shown above. One outcome of story mapping is that children come to realize that stories have characters whose goals are in conflict. And by sharing and discussing their maps, children become aware of how stories are structured. This helps them to understand what they are reading and how to organize what they write when called on to create their own stories.

Above all, when using literary works as a strategy to help language minority students improve their reading and writing skills, it is important to remember that in the early stages of second-language acquisition, students should be encouraged to use both their first and second languages. Later, as second-language proficiency develops, they may focus their efforts increasingly on English.

Providing Substantial Oral Language Experiences

When working with language minority students, Lindfors (1989) suggests that teachers develop an "authentic" language environment where children can creatively construct language events in both their first and second languages. The construction process begins with somebody talking, which requires somebody to listen. Over time, this interaction between talking and listening shows students that there is a relationship between oral language, comprehension in reading, and the writing process. Two activities for providing an authentic language environment are *show-and-tell* and *story time*.

Show-and-tell gives children an opportunity to tell each other about something they have brought to school to share or about an experience they have had. This activity has long been popular with children, no doubt because it is the one time where they can control and shape both *what to tell* and *how it is told*. And the listeners enjoy show-and-tell because they also are participating by responding to what their classmates have shared with them.

The sharing that goes on in show-and-tell is especially important for language minority students because it occurs in a social situation where they feel comfortable. And it occurs in a context where they can use their oral language to convey meanings and receive messages expressed by others. In other words, show-and-tell provides an authentic language environment where children can interact with classmates and construct their own messages in their own way in their second language.

Story time is another activity contributing to second-language development. Stories can be told or read aloud by the teacher, listened to on a tape recorder (recorded by the teacher, a student, or a professional), or experienced through dramatization. Story telling provides both linguistic and social benefit for students who have not been read to, especially those who have not been read to in English. For the individual, listening to stories is an effective way to become acquainted with the literary language of English in all its forms. For the class

as a whole, stories provide a common knowledge base that can be drawn upon to facilitate subsequent reading and writing activities. The most important aspect of story time, however, is the discussion that any given story generates.

In addition to the oral language activity associated with story telling, children can share many of their reading or writing activities among themselves. They can write texts for wordless books and use comics, songs, and poems as resources to stimulate oral language interaction. One popular activity that combines story telling with show-and-tell is the "author's chair," a special chair designated as a place where children can sit and read what they have written to their classmates. After the reading, the "authors" invite the class to discuss the work and give them feedback.

Shared book experiences are one of the best ways for children to participate in oral language activities that connect with reading and listening. Reading or telling predictable stories is especially good for emergent readers, as is reading from a "Big Book." Big Books are much larger copies of standard children's trade books, designed so that everyone in the group can see the pictures and words of a story while it is being read. Big Books are available commercially, or the teacher can make them using the text and/or illustrations the students have created. Using Big Books captures some of the same intimacy of being read to while sitting in the lap of a caring adult at home.

When using Big Books in the classroom, teachers read the story, pointing to the words as they go. The children are invited to join in when they feel comfortable doing so. The teacher encourages participation by stopping at predictable points in the story and asking children to fill in words and phrases that make sense to them. A modification of the DR-TA technique mentioned earlier is the Directed Listening-Thinking Activity (DL-TA). It is basically the same as DR-TA except that the focus is on oral language rather than reading.

Once the book has been read, other book-sharing experiences appropriate for language minority students include dramatizations and

art activities. Above all, shared book experiences must involve a high degree of student participation in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere.

Providing for Silent Sustained Reading

Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) is simply a period of quiet time set aside during the day when children read books of their own choosing. By choosing what they want to read, language minority students will select stories and books that interest them and at a reading level with which they feel most comfortable. Their reading may range from simply looking at the pictures in a book, to "pretend reading," to full-fledged involvement in the reading process.

Without being required to answer questions or other follow-up activities, children look on this kind of reading as an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. And through exposure to a variety of language forms and functions, which serve as models for subsequent language events, they become better readers, writers, and spellers.

Encouraging the Use of Student Journals

Two kinds of student journals appropriate for language minority children are *dialogue* journals and *book response* journals. Dialogue journals are intended to give students an opportunity to write informally about anything that is on their mind and to receive a written response from a classmate, their teacher, their parents, or other adults they trust. (See fastback 266 *Dialogue Journals: Writing as Conversation* by Kathy Danielson.) They provide a means for children to share privately in writing any questions and concerns they have that are not ordinarily addressed in formal instructional settings. Students may write about any aspect of the their life, either in or out of the classroom, and without any worry about being judged or evaluated. Dialogue journals are especially useful with language minority students who have achieved some oral proficiency in their second language, because they can write informally using the kind of discourse

they use in speech. This kind of purposeful communication has been highly successful, because it encourages spontaneity in writing, which in turn fosters self-confidence and writing fluency.

For book response journals, students write a reaction to reading they are doing in class. This gives them an opportunity to express their own ideas and to comment on their favorite characters and their actions. Book response journals also can be used to respond to virtually anything children read (magazine and newspaper articles, cereal boxes, etc.). When responding to stories or longer fiction works, children share their understanding of what was read as well as their personal involvement with the text. For second-language learners, the personal involvement aspect is very important.

Many teachers use journals to "talk" with each child individually about concerns, books, and ideas. Below is an example of a fifth-grade language minority child's entry in her book response journal together with the teacher's response.

The Bulls of Altamira
by Mayra

The story is about Maria and papa finding a Stone Age painting. I liked the part when Maria and papa found all the paintings in the cave. And I don't like the part when Maria was 18 years old and her papa died.

I agree with you, Mayra. Death in the family is always hard to accept. At least Maria can think about the happy memories she had with her papa. How would you have changed the ending of the story?

Mrs. Andrews

Incorporating the Use of Technology

Earlier, the authors expressed their reservations about using computers with language minority children, since so much of the available software is the fragmented, drill-and-practice variety. Such software is more of a hindrance than a help with these children, since it does not give them an opportunity to use language in a functional, interactive way. However, there have been instances where *computer networking* has been used successfully with language minority children. Networking works like dialogue journals except that computer hookups and printouts are used instead of pencils and notebooks, and communication usually involves more than two people.

A typical classroom equipped for computer networking contains about 12 computer terminals and software that allows for real-time interaction. The students and teacher each sit at a terminal and type what they want to say. The first student to write presses the transmit key; and the message, together with the sender's identification, immediately appears on all the screens in the class. As new messages are typed in and sent, the screen scrolls to make room for them, approximating a kind of written class discussion. The computer stores the entire interaction, which can be reviewed at any time during the class or printed out in its entirety at the end of the class period.

When writing conversationally on the computer network, students are engaged in a natural and functional form of communication, where they negotiate meaning and learn from each other. Over time, students begin to explore new ways to express themselves in writing and to learn the conventions of written text.

With computer networking, teachers can provide a wide range of authentic language experiences. In addition, computer networks allow children to conference about their writing with peers and to publish their work right in the classroom.

Using Cooperative Learning

Involving language minority students in cooperative learning groups in the mainstream classroom is a strategy teachers have used successfully. (See fastback 299 *Cooperative Learning* by Eileen Veronica Hilke.) Working cooperatively on assignments and projects with native speakers of English increases the opportunities language minority students have to hear and produce language and to negotiate meaning with others. Cooperative learning activities provide a non-threatening atmosphere in which language minority students feel accepted and more confident about themselves, thus raising their self-esteem. Also, friendships develop among students of different backgrounds.

Language minority children learn English by interacting with their peers in the classroom and on the playground. In school they learn functional words and phrases, like "Where's the bathroom?" or "It's my turn!" Cooperative grouping takes this process a step further by requiring children to use words within the context of an academic task. They come to understand and use the specialized vocabulary necessary to successfully complete the group task. They feel more comfortable taking risks with language in a small group of peers than in a large whole-class setting. They become involved in the culture of the classroom as part of a group working toward a common goal, and everyone has responsibility for achieving the group's goal.

Cooperative grouping allows children to get to know each other in ways that do not happen in a whole-class setting. When left to their own devices, children tend to pick their friends from their own social or linguistic group. However, cooperative grouping provides students the opportunity to work with those they may have never considered interacting with before. In such a setting, the likelihood of their becoming friends increases. For this reason, the teacher should make sure that language minority students are represented in each group whenever possible.

Conclusion

Meeting the needs of language minority students in a mainstream classroom is possible if teachers take into account the following: First, they need to recognize the barriers to educational opportunity these children face and to understand the cultural and linguistic "baggage" they carry with them into school. Removing barriers to educational opportunity means that teachers must replace reductionist approaches to language learning with whole-language approaches that use language in functional and meaningful ways. It means that they must develop sensitivity toward the different languages and cultures of their students. It means that they communicate often with students, their parents, and with other teachers who work with the same students. They must show they care about their language minority students and their families.

Second, mainstream teachers need to recognize they are better prepared than they realize to work with language minority students. Most teachers have an intuitive grasp of language learning processes and usually have a repertoire of appropriate language activities that can be adapted for use with these students. Incorporating whole-language approaches into the existing language arts program is effective not only with language minority children but with all children. Practices that have been especially useful with language minority children include: using literary works, providing substantial oral language experiences, allowing for silent, sustained reading, using student journals, and incorporating technology.

Third, teachers need to use cooperative learning strategies in mainstreamed classes. Cooperative grouping is especially suited to language minority students because it allows them to work in an atmosphere where all children are encouraged to develop friendships with others who speak different languages. This aspect alone may be one way to break down language prejudice in our society. Children who are knowledgeable about and sensitive to similarities and differences in languages and cultures will most likely develop attitudes of acceptance and cooperation, which should serve them well long after they have finished school.

Finally, with a positive attitude, an understanding of language processes, and a refocusing of language activities they already provide, regular teachers not only will be able to get language minority students involved in their own learning but also will see them as classroom resources, who can help their classmates develop more global awareness and tolerance of differences.

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